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Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

6708th meeting

Thursday, 26 January 2012, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Sangqu	(South Africa)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Bonne
	Germany	Mr. Eick
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Kumar
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Twenty-ninth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2011/807*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Twenty-ninth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2011/807*)

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Côte d'Ivoire to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Albert Koenders, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/807*, which contains the twenty-ninth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

I now give the floor to Mr. Koenders.

Mr. Koenders: Mr. President, let me start by stating that it is a great honour and pleasure to address you in person in my capacity as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Côte d'Ivoire since October last year. The first three months of my mission have, of course, focused on the legislative elections, but I would like to start by putting the situation in Côte d'Ivoire into a slightly broader perspective.

Remarkable progress has been registered in Côte d'Ivoire towards restoring normalcy since the end of the violent post-election crisis last year. The security situation is stabilizing, those displaced have started to return, the economy is starting to show resilience, and the legislative elections were held successfully and, I think, most importantly, after last year's crisis, in relative peace, although the final results have yet to be proclaimed and certified. President Ouattara has undertaken important steps to strengthen subregional cooperation, and I think that Côte d'Ivoire is taking steps towards reclaiming its historical role as a pillar of stability and prosperity in the subregion.

That important progress notwithstanding, significant challenges remain. Côte d'Ivoire is still struggling to recover from the devastating crisis, which took a heavy toll on the country and its people, while many national capacities have been destroyed. The root causes of instability and potential triggers of violence have remained. Important challenges and issues relating to security and national reconciliation should not be underestimated and require, in my view, the political attention of the Council.

The priorities identified by the President and his Government in areas where the United Nations is mandated to provide support remain valid and relevant. The support of United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) is essential to help the Government stabilize the security situation, which includes the reconstitution and reform of security and rule-of-law institutions; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; the protection of civilians; facilitating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; and fostering the crucial process of national reconciliation, early recovery and the promotion and protection of human rights.

The holding of the legislative elections without delay and in a relatively peaceful atmosphere is, in our view, a significant achievement that marked a major step forward in the restoration of constitutional order, more inclusive governance, and the completion of a key unfinished aspect of the peace process. UNOCI worked actively with the Government and all political stakeholders, including the Facilitator, to help ensure that the legislative elections proceeded in a manner that contributes to securing lasting stability in Côte d'Ivoire.

Although voter participation was lower than during the 2010 presidential elections, the turnout, approximately 36 percent, was similar during previous legislative polls in the country, in 1990 and 1995. UNOCI played an important role across the country in support of the authorities which were responsible for the organization and conduct of the polls, while providing the same level of technical and logistical support to the Independent Electoral Commission as was the case during the presidential elections. I would also highlight the fact that the Ivorian security agencies provided effective security, in concert with UNOCI,

The mission and the United Nations country team provided the same level of technical and logistical support to the Independent Electoral Commission as was the case during the presidential elections.

In keeping with the mandate given to me by the Council to certify that all stages of the electoral process were held in accordance with international standards, I will yet have to certify these important elections, and I will do so after the national institutions have evaluated the process. The Constitutional Council, which is currently examining 110 electoral complaints filed by candidates, has announced its decisions on the appeals filed by a number of candidates; their proclamation is expected in early February.

Now that the legislative elections have taken place, it is important to focus attention on some other priority areas, including national reconciliation, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform and consolidation of the security situation, particularly in Abidjan, the west and the border areas. It is, in my view, equally important to focus on addressing the root causes of the Ivorian crisis, including issues such as access to land and imbalanced development. The question of impunity also remains an important concern; it is essential that all those who are responsible for gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law be held accountable, regardless of their political affiliation or camp.

The overall security situation in Côte d'Ivoire has remained relatively calm. However, insecurity in the west, including criminal activities, and the threat of cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons has continued to pose a major challenge. A large number of weapons remain in circulation in Abidjan and throughout the country, a situation which has contributed to the high levels of crime and security incidents involving armed elements. The Government has begun to take measures to address security-related challenges, and we are currently discussing with the Ivorian authorities a concrete set of support measures that the international community could provide in this regard.

Let me conclude by saying that Côte d'Ivoire has made significant progress towards restoring normalcy. Legislative elections mark the completion of a key aspect of the peace process and the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement. Notwithstanding the progress made in the past months, Côte d'Ivoire is still struggling to recover from the post-electoral crisis and will continue to need the Council's support in addition to that provided by other international and regional partners. I can assure the Council that the United Nations, through UNOCI, continues to make every effort to support the Government in addressing key challenges and to help the Government to materialize its vision towards reclaiming its historical role as a pillar of stability and prosperity in the subregion.

The President: I thank Mr. Koenders for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Bamba (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin by wishing you, Sir, and the other representatives present good health, happiness and peace throughout 2012. I also take this opportunity to convey my delegation's warmest congratulations to you on your accession to the presidency of the Council this month.

My delegation thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Albert Koenders, for his excellent briefing on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, which accurately portrayed the reality on the ground. I also congratulate him on his outstanding work and on the perfect understanding of the situation he has demonstrated in his brief tenure.

It has been nine months since the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire came to en end. The toll in human lives, estimated at approximately 3,000, would have been higher without the decisive involvement of the United Nations in protecting the civilian population. Indeed, acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and in keeping with the mandate defined in resolution 1975 (2011), the United Nations saved an untold number of lives. In hindsight, we can better grasp the entire scope of the United Nations intervention in Côte d'Ivoire and the full meaning it gives to the concept of the responsibility to protect. We must clearly state that we were on the verge of genocide in Côte d'Ivoire during the post-electoral crisis.

We are therefore in a good position to echo the Secretary-General's statement to the conference on the

responsibility to protect convened on 18 January by the Stanley Foundation in New York. The Secretary-General said that the principle of the responsibility to protect is a fundamental humanitarian principle that is here to stay. My delegation commends the Secretary-General's decision to instruct his Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect to consider ways to make effective use of the provisions of Articles VI, VII and VIII of the United Nations Charter with a view to better operationalizing that principle. We look forward eagerly to the results of his study.

My delegation notes the excellent report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) contained in document S/2011/807*, and of course endorses the conclusions contained therein. The report correctly notes the significant progress that has been achieved in a number of areas, including the peaceful legislative elections held on 11 December 2011. The report also underscores, however, some significant challenges ahead. I should like to make a few brief remarks on issues that my delegation deems to be critical.

I turn first to the stabilization of the security situation, which is manageable in Abdijan but also requires considerable resources. This is due to the high number of light weapons in circulation and the presence of numerous common criminals who escaped detention during the crisis. The security situation in the western part of the countries remains a source of ongoing concern owing to the recurrent activities of mercenaries and militias, especially on the border with Liberia, which is densely forested and difficult to control. My delegation believes that the optimization of the military resources of UNOCI and the United Nations Mission in Liberia in the context of inter-mission cooperation has been a successful experiment that should be pursued, as it provides a deterrent to potential or real threats of stabilization.

The subregional aspect of the security situation in the border zone actually extends to the entire Mano River region and encompasses such cross-border threats as piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, drug trafficking, money-laundering and the terrorist threats posed by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram, as well as the influx of weapons from Libya. The issue must therefore be addressed in the context of a collective security system that includes Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Indeed, that was the purpose behind the meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the four countries that was held from 22 to 25 January in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

In this regard, my delegation commends South Africa's initiative to convene on 12 January a high-level debate of the Security Council (see S/PV.6702), personally presided by President Zuma, on the critical cooperation, under Chapter VIII of the Charter, between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, in the prevention, management and resolution of regional crises.

Secondly, with respect to security sector reform (SSR), my delegation believes that it is a key element of the entire post-crisis normalization process inasmuch as it forges a direct, positive link to national reconciliation that triggers a virtuous chain reaction in other areas of the post-conflict architecture. However, national ownership is essential to the SSR process, as was recognized in the conclusions reached last year in the Security Council debate (see S/PV.6630) held under the Nigerian presidency, to which we pay tribute.

Côte d'Ivoire intends to secure national ownership of SSR through the holding of public hearings on security and defence, which will include the convening of a national dialogue between the people and the army. We seek an interactive exchange in which the people's perspective enriches the reform process. Our goal is for the people in all their aspects, including soldiers and the army, to assume ownership of the reform and ultimately for the army to be reconciled with the population. Once national consensus has been achieved, SSR must be geared to creating a reunified, professional, disciplined republican army subject to civilian executive authority, respectful of the rule of law and mindful of human rights.

Thirdly, with respect to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), I note that our experience of this process over several years has led us to conclude that the cantonment of former combatants in recruitment centres was counterproductive. We therefore feel that vetting is key to the process. Indeed, accurate vetting will allow us to select those who should remain in the new army and ensure that those who are not selected will be directed forthwith to technical centres where they will receive practical training to assist their reintegration into working life.

Moreover, we are planning innovative approaches, concerning the establishment of a reserve force to undertake non-military activities, in particular civil construction and agricultural projects.

Fourthly, with respect to humanitarian assistance, let us recall that, at the height of the post-electoral crisis a year ago, we had 1 million internally displaced persons and 500,000 refugees in neighbouring countries. Today, there are no more than 185,000 internally displaced persons and 161,000 refugees in neighbouring countries. We are pursuing our efforts to bring all Ivorians home. We want that to take place on a voluntary basis and in the context of a tripartite agreement framework between Côte d'Ivoire, the host country and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Four such agreements have been concluded — with Liberia, Ghana, Togo and Guinea. Based on our experience as part of that process, all indications are that the pace of return would increase if people had confidence in assurances with regard to living conditions and security. In that regard, there is a need to build 17,000 housing units and 100 health centres.

My delegation welcomes the $8 million provided by the Central Emergency Response Fund to address dire situations. We also welcome the recent trip to Côte d'Ivoire by Ms. Catherine Bragg, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, during which she launched the 2012 consolidated appeal intended to raise $173 million, which is the level of resources needed by the humanitarian sector to address the needs of more than 2 million vulnerable people.

Also on the humanitarian front, it is worth noting the growing awareness on the issue of gender, in particular with regard to sexual violence. Rape victims are increasingly being informed of the treatment available to them and are being encouraged to take advantage of their legal rights. The Minister for Families, Women and Children has been responsible for significant progress in that area.

With regard to health, the President's free health care initiative, which has been in place for a year, will end this month. A system for participatory medical coverage will then be put in place, following a study currently under way. In the meantime, free treatment will continue to be provided for the most disadvantaged sectors of the population, in particular children under the age of six and pregnant women without means, who will be provided free birthing kits.

Fifthly, with regard to national reconciliation and the pursuit of political dialogue, the Commission on Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation is now fully operational, is expanding consultations and appears to be setting up its functions for the long term, as reconciliation is not a time-bound event but, instead, a process that takes time.

Pursuing a political process is an inescapable requirement in that context — a process that makes it possible for all of the country's political stakeholders to develop political maturity and to exercise their constitutional rights. It is for that reason that we should acknowledge — without self-satisfaction — that the holding of peaceful legislative elections in Côte d'Ivoire just seven months after emerging from the crisis is an outcome that merits being highlighted. In addition, while we regret that the party formerly in power did not participate, we hope that, for the sake of the upcoming municipal and regional elections, the Front populaire ivoirien will take advantage of the opportunity to participate, which will only benefit Côte d'Ivoire's democracy. My delegation will soon submit to the United Nations an official request for assistance for those elections.

Lastly, I would like to say that in order to overcome all the challenges to which I have referred, my country more than ever needs the invaluable support of the international community, first and foremost that of the United Nations — and in particular that of its leading organ, the Security Council.

My Government will soon submit a formal request for a reconsideration of the sanctions regime on Côte d'Ivoire established by resolution 1572 (2002), with a view to the partial or full lifting of the embargo currently in place.

Peace and stability are slowly but surely making progress in Côte d'Ivoire. My Government would therefore officially like to invite the Security Council to visit Côte d'Ivoire from 22 to 30 March, in order that its members can have an opportunity to genuinely see the progress that has been achieved on the ground.

Côte d'Ivoire is a country open to the outside world, and it intends to once again pursue its natural calling. It is for that reason that, soon after being sworn in, His Excellency President Alassane Ouattara carried

out numerous State visits, beginning with his partners in neighbouring countries and in the subregion. As I speak, President Ouattara is on an official visit to France. Two weeks ago, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton of the United States. And, at the beginning of the year, he received China's Minister for Foreign Affairs in the course of his official visit to Côte d'Ivoire.

The African Development Bank is preparing to bring its headquarters to Côte d'Ivoire.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire is returning to the international stage, ready to once again take up its role as an anchor of stability and growth in the service of international peace, security and cooperation.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.